Inside Roseville MAGAZINE

ROSEVILLE'S TECH SECTOR EXPOSED:
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Mischief prevention

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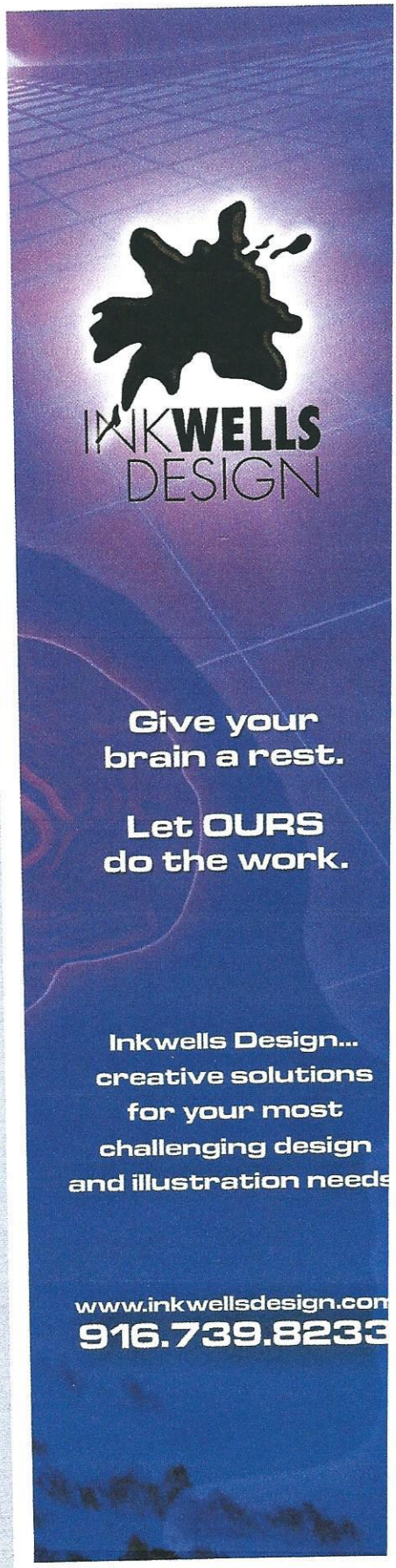
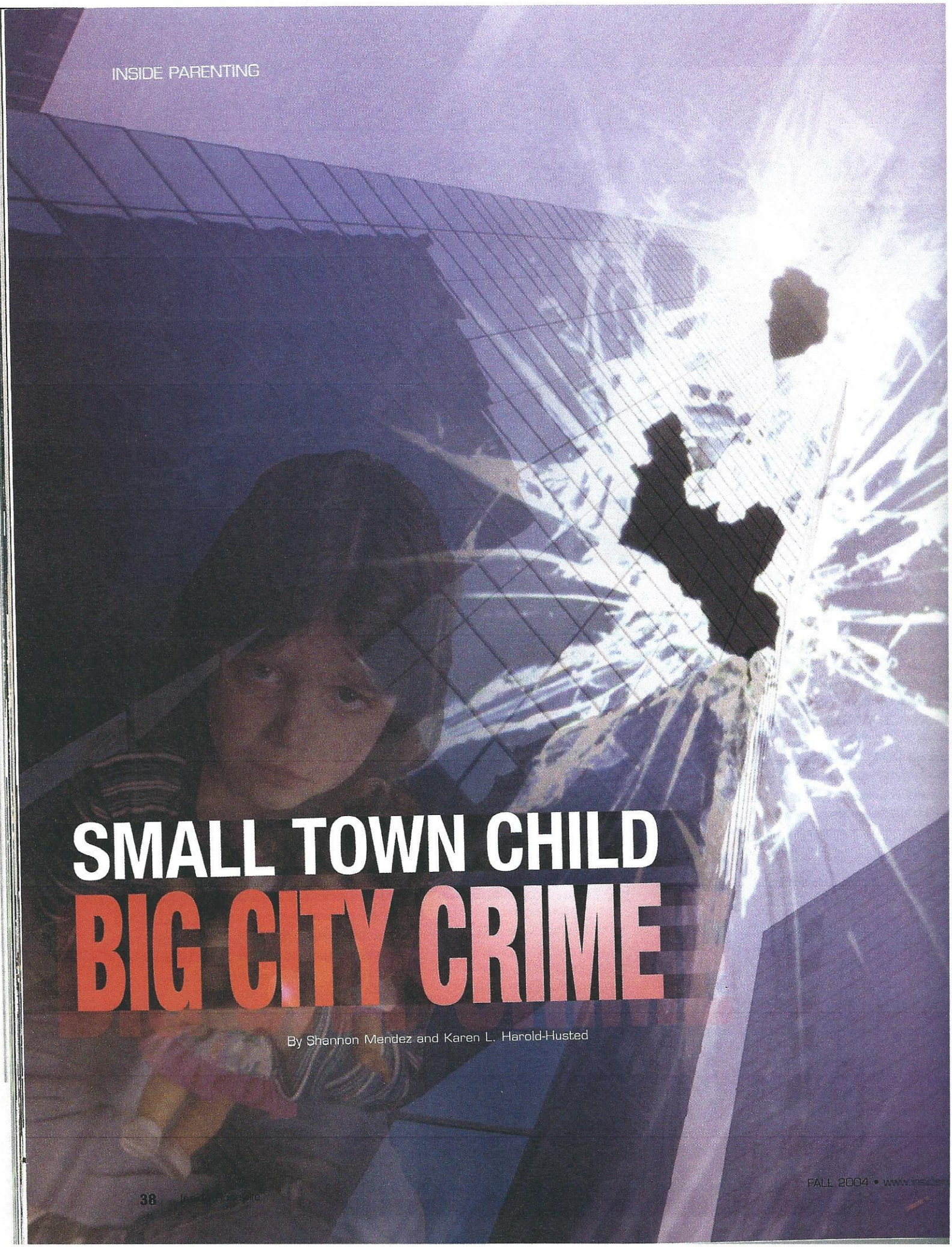
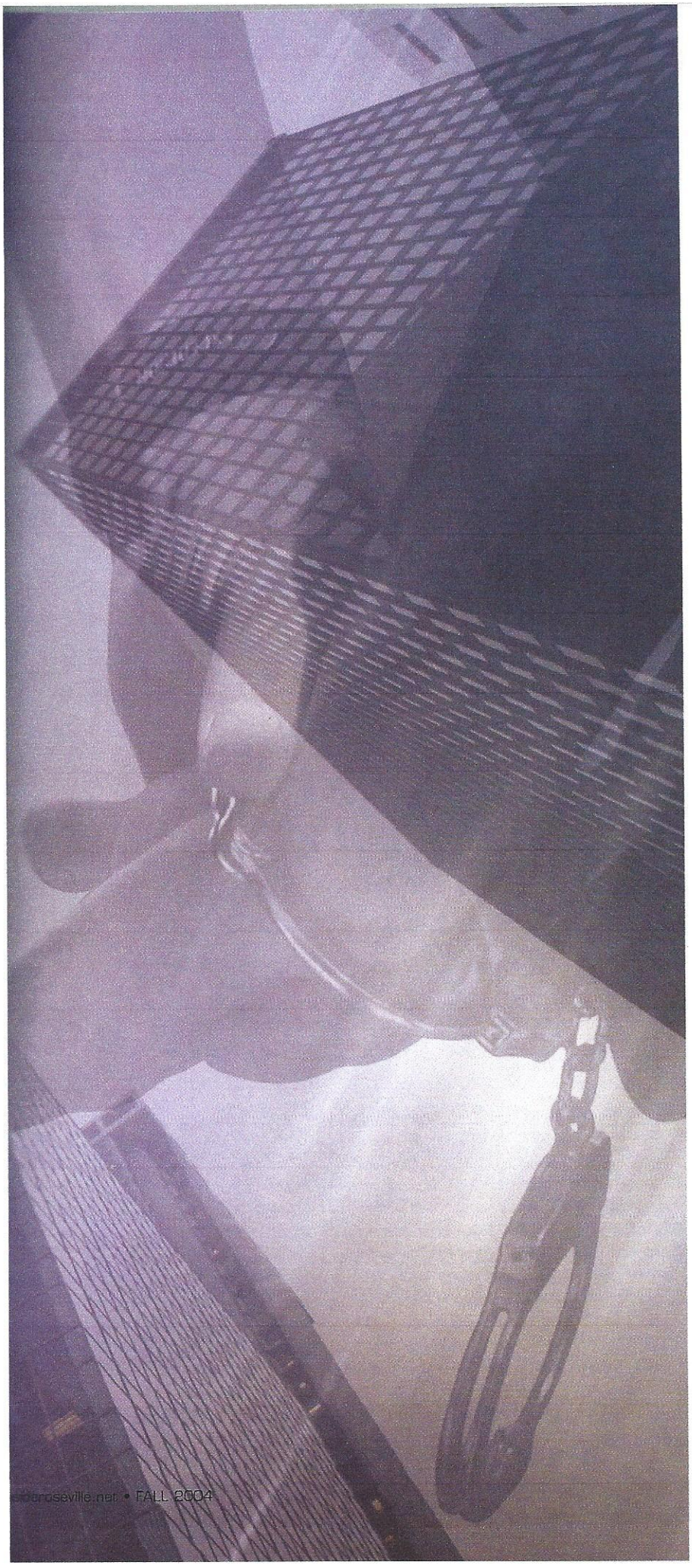
Randy Weiss has been writing for publication since 1994. During his studies at The Ohio State University, he wrote a monthly restaurant review column entitled Delectable Dining." He most recently has worked as a freelance journalist for the Napa Valley Register.





SMALL TOWN CHILD BIG CITY CRIME

By Shannon Mendez and Karen L. Harold-Husted



"[I] realized that I wanted more from my life."

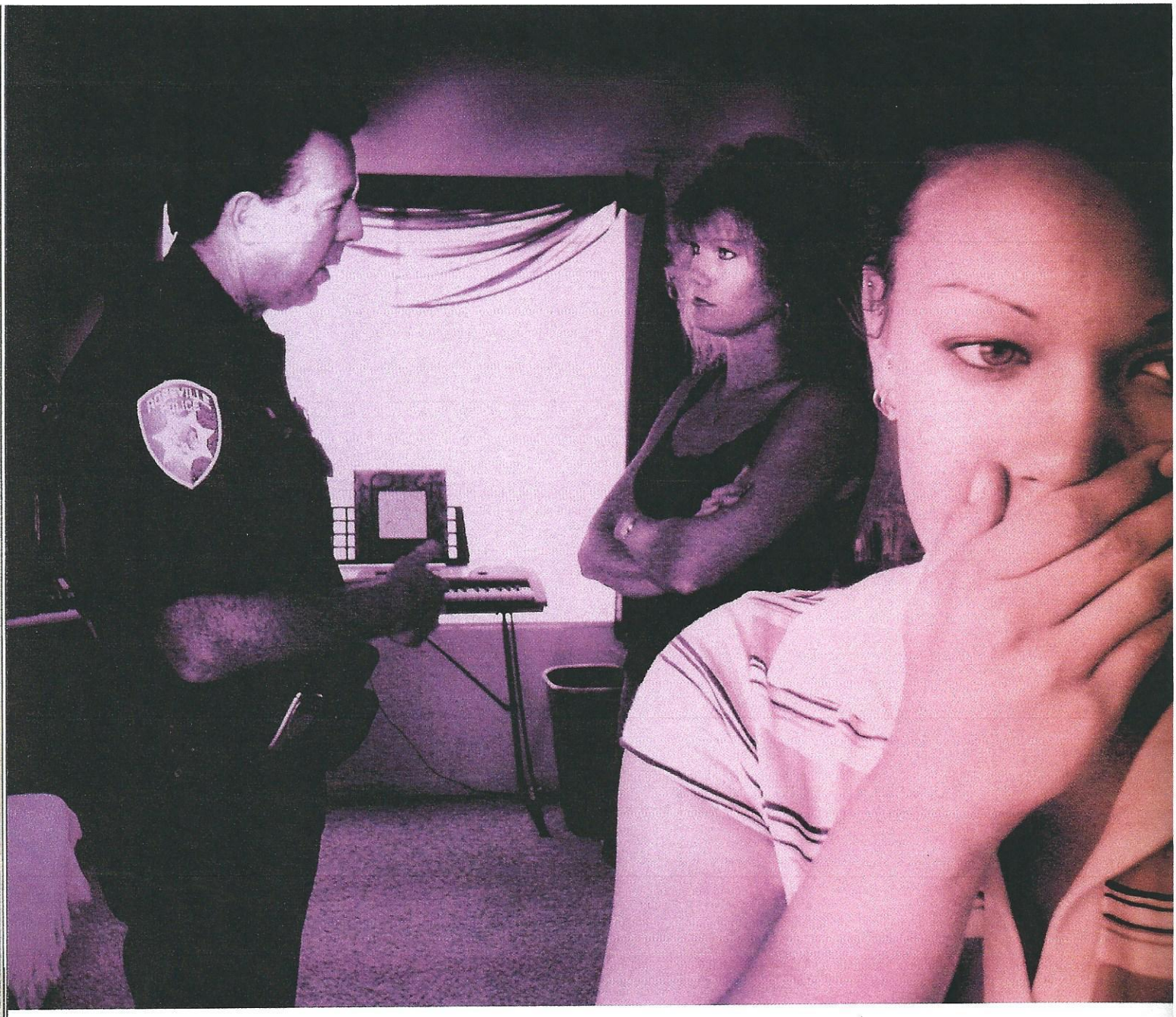
Sitting inside a local correctional facility, Paul reflected on his life and had a moment of clarity as he recalled the actions that had brought him there.

From a very young age, Paul started acting out in any manner that would get him attention. He would swear, make obscene gestures at faculty members at his school and behave insubordinately. He would steal from other kids the material things he wanted but had no legitimate means of getting. Although Paul's parents took an interest in his extracurricular activities by attending events such as school open houses and baseball games, it wasn't enough. When he started running away, he didn't consider the impact it had on his family or older sister because "it [was] all about me."

Paul is just one of many teens who, despite a seemingly comfortable home life, become enticed by the excitement of crime.

"I was first arrested when I was 17, riding in a stolen car and taken to juvenile hall and booked for joy riding. When I was 17, I thought I was tough for telling people I had been to 'the hall' and demanded respect for it."

No longer a teen, Paul now contemplates his past. He committed countless crimes without getting caught before finally being apprehended and coming to the stark realization that he needed to make a change. He is one of hundreds of Roseville teens who have been incarcerated for their crimes.



A small city of just over 40,000 only 10 years ago, now, according to the California Department of Finance's 2004 City Population Rankings report, Roseville's population is 96,900, up from 79,921 just four years prior. That number is expected to hit 102,000 by 2005 and will likely continue to grow.

How does the rapid growth of Roseville affect the youth crime rate? One would assume that an increase in crime is inevitable. However, the statistics show otherwise.

Officer Michael Salsbury of the Roseville Police Department says that despite the population growth, the number of juvenile felonies has remained stable, and misdemeanors have actually fallen 3 percent compared to 2000 statistics.

Salsbury is in charge of youth services. His position was first created to deal with truancy and runaway issues. Previously, if a child ran away from home and the parents had no idea of his or her whereabouts, a call placed to the police department would result in the filing of a report and the creation of a flyer with the pertinent information. At that time, no further investigative steps could be taken unless the parents provided additional information. The department didn't have the resources to try to track down missing kids or follow up with their families to determine why they left home. Now, his position has expanded into that of the "family crisis guy."

The Facts

Youth crime is a burgeoning problem in t
According to a recent survey, about 9 pe
murders in the U.S. are committed by you
under the age of 18. Petty theft and assa
battery are the crimes juveniles are most
commit.

In 2002 in Placer County, a total of 1
juvenile misdemeanor arrests were made
such as petty theft, drug use and vandal
common. Felonies, including homicide, ba
and drug trafficking, accounted for 429 a

In 2004, Roseville, the largest city in P
County, ranked 67 of 447 California citie
terms of population. Sacramento placed

:cognizing the Early Signs

: Roseville Police Department has adopted a)-pronged approach to safeguard the welfare of city's youth: working directly with schools and)lementing outreach programs within the)artment. What makes these programs so ective is that they target initial defiant behavior ore it has the chance to become something re serious.

n schools, service officers provide support in ndling the growing number of problems within ool boundaries. Their presence is important, as y develop relationships with the staff and stu- nts and can intervene in the event of problemat- activity.

And within the police department is The Parent)ject, an outreach program started 15 years ago

Salsbury's methodology has gotten results. "Dealing with defiant behavior while it's just defiant behavior is working." Since the program's inception, calls for assistance from the families of at-risk children have been reduced by more than 70%.

Getting Convicted Youths Back on Track

"The key is keeping them busy."

This advice on coping with youngsters was given to Mike Lombordo and his wife at the baby shower of their soon-to-be-born first child. While that was many years ago, Lombordo has found that it still holds true for the youth of today. Lombordo is the probation manager of the Placer County Probation Department. Probation, the conditional release of an adjudicated offender back into the community, is currently being granted to 394 juveniles in Placer County. Among these juveniles, the top three criminal offenses committed (approximately 80%) were battery, theft and drug possession.

While on probation, juveniles are under general supervision and may or may not be required to enroll in comprehensive programs designed to aid at-risk teens and their families. One third of Placer County juveniles on probation are enrolled in such programs. In these programs, social workers, public health nurses, mental health professionals, drug and alcohol counselors, and educators join forces to provide a "unified service plan."

One Placer County program is Child Systems of Care/Intensive Services Caseload. It uses a risk-assessment process to determine the specific needs of each family and formulate a customized plan of action. It has been so successful that many other states have modeled their programs on it, and the President of Mexico visited to explore the possibility of implementing such a program in his own country. Forty families are currently participating in the program.

Diversion programs, as discussed earlier, are a collaborative effort involving probation department personnel, social workers and a facilitator to help families and teens develop goals. Teens may perform community service by volunteering at organizations such as Loaves and Fishes and the Placer County Women's Center. Setting goals and engaging in activities like these can help them rebuild relationships and better cope with peer pressure.

One young woman who participated in a diversion program went from virtual high school absenteeism to graduating at the top of her class with approximately a 3.8 grade point average. She started cosmetology school and currently lives on her own in Nevada. Sometimes the demands of adult life can provide the structure that teens need to straighten their lives out. They have less time to get in trouble because they have to spend more time thinking of their careers, finances and the day-to-day responsibilities of work.

Another way that the realities of adult life can be used to aid first-time juvenile offenders is the Placer County Peer Court. In this program, teens help teens. Juveniles assume the roles of public defender, prosecutor and jury and determine the outcome of juvenile cases. An acting or pro tem judge from the Placer County Superior Court volunteers his or her time to facilitate the process. Approximately 300 cases are heard a year, and juries typically hand down dispositions such as community service or enrollment in victim awareness programs. Hearings are open to the public. You can find out more about this program at http://www.peercourt.com.

The advantage of programs like these is that they provide children and families with a voice and the ownership of problems and their future resolution. Lombordo sums it up succinctly: "It's about teaching instead of correcting and telling. We help families facilitate change." As of last quarter, 91% of the juveniles involved in these programs avoid-

Vhat makes this program so effective is that it argets initial defiant behavior before it has the :hance to become something more serious.

assist parents at their wits' end in dealing with ir troubled children (www.parentproject.com). It ns to help juveniles whose behavior includes ning away from home, truancy, incorrigibility and :ohol consumption. Instead of institutionalizing uths for these minor legal infractions, the 10- ek program teaches parenting and communica- n skills as alternatives. Because of its success, e Parent Project has now been implemented in - states. In Roseville, a new class begins every) days.

In escalated situations such as those involving eft or violence, an in-house diversion program ay be established. In this scenario, Officer lsbury works hands on with parents and teens develop a plan to effect change. Rules are tablished, and if the teen breaks them, severe nsequences will result, from work detail to ending time in juvenile hall.

A key element of these diversion programs is tting goals. If teens want a driver's license, for ample, their attitude, grades and behavior must ow a radical improvement. If they desire inde- ndence, they must prove themselves to be sponsible and accountable for their actions.

Giving children and families a voice and ownership in their growth is important to success.

ed subsequent legal infractions. The truancy rate for these kids dropped from 30% to only 2%.

Preventive Measures Parents Can Take

Most children are good kids deep down. Peer pressure and the trials and tribulations of blossoming adulthood can often present the opportunity for trouble. As youths discover their social identities and explore newfound freedoms, negative influences from other young adults can cause good kids to go bad. Most juvenile crime occurs between 3 p.m. and 7 p.m. on school days, according to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency's Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 1999 National Report. This finding suggests that a lack of adult supervision and constructive activities to keep kids occupied may be factors in youth crime. The key to keeping Roseville's growing population of youngsters out of trouble appears to be participation in community activities and the implementation of intervention programs.

Roseville offers various school-, city- and community-sponsored activities. Roseville elementary schools have Adventure Clubs, state-licensed before- and after-school care at 16 school sites. The Roseville Elementary and Dry Creek School Districts work cooperatively with the City of Roseville Parks, Recreation and Libraries to provide children in kindergarten through sixth grade with supervised recreational activities such as art, drama, sports and field trips. Homework assistance is also offered.

The Adventure Clubs program began in 1987 at three elementary school sites and now serves over 1,000 families. Ken Bailey, assistant director of Roseville Parks, Recreation and Libraries, says, "When a new elementary school is built in Roseville, a new Adventure Club facility is part of the school design." For more information, call the City of Roseville Parks, Recreation and Libraries at (916) 774-5505.

For teens, Roseville intermediate and high schools offer many extracurricular programs such as sports, band and academic clubs. Outside the school system, the City of Roseville Parks, Recreation and Libraries provides a variety of activities, from sports to classes to dances. For more information, visit www.rosevilleparks.com or call (916) 774-5242.

However, much of the time, youths with a rebellious streak aren't interested in school sports or city programs. Fortunately, Roseville has grown rapidly, resulting in a growth of options for teens like these. Commercial computer-training classes like those held at the New Directions Learning Center on Sunrise can provide youths with structure and goals. Learning computer technology can be not only captivating but also highly beneficial for a youth's future. Music classes, martial arts and even local theater classes like the ones held at the Roseville Theater are all good after-school options to keep teens occupied and productive rather than bored and destructive.

Paul, our troubled youth from the beginning of this piece, now works in the field of electronics, is in a healthy relationship and looks forward to purchasing a house one day. He enjoys being an uncle to his two-year-old niece and 10-month-old nephew. As he considers their future and the importance of staying away from the kind of life he once led, he gives this insight:

"If you can find a way to relate to someone who is in trouble, [with] sports, music, family, anything, that is the only way that you're going to get them interested and listening." •